Method Trial 3

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For my third methods trial I used experiential learning. For a group of managers I performed an activity called Penny Drop. This is an ‘oldie but a goodie’ activity. With almost no introduction to the subject, I innocently ask the group, “How many drops of water can fit on this penny?” They typically guess 2-5 drops of water can fit before the water will overflow. I ask them to write their personal guess on the board.

Next I distribute one penny, one dropper, and a small container of water. The exercise begins as they begin carefully dropping the water. Almost immediate they can see they far underestimated the amount of water the penny can hold. In most cases, a penny can hold at least 45-50 drops of water when they are carefully applied.

I ask, what did they observe? What did they learn? We discuss the difference between what they assumed what would occur and what actually did occur. They are surprised they so greatly misjudged the penny’s ability

Then I disclose that we are going to talk about Delegation. I explain the common fears of delegation, the biggest of which is fear of overloading ones direct employees. Next we compare and contrast the penny exercise with how much a penny vs employee can handle. When done correctly the ‘ah ha’ moment arrives when they see the parallels.

I have done this activity numerous times with good results each time. However a disadvantage is that it is pretty popular and the learners may have seen it before.